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SUBJECT: Southern Sudan Food Security Crisis Spurs International
Donor Response

REF: KHARTOUM 895

11. (U) Summary: Parts of Southern Sudan are experiencing severe food insecurity as a result of: (1) high levels of physical insecurity and resulting displacements; (2) high food prices; and (3) late rains that have extended the hunger gap three months longer than normal. According to the Annual Needs and Livelihood Assessment (ANLA) conducted in 2008, 1.2 million individuals in Southern Sudan may be severely food insecure until the end of 2009. During the week of August 15, the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) and the UN issued appeals to address the southern Sudan food security crisis. USAID has granted WFP the flexibility to shift substantial pre-positioned U.S. food aid to meet these needs. Additional disaster resources may be required to avert a widespread crisis.
END SUMMARY.

ANLA: 1.2 Million Severely Food Insecure in 2009

12. (U) In October 2008, the Southern Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (SSRRC), Food Security Technical Secretariat/Southern Sudan Commission for Census, Statistics and Evaluation, World Food Program (WFP), UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), GoSS Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), and the Ministry of Health (MoH) conducted an Annual Needs and Livelihood Assessment (ANLA) to project food security and nutrition needs for 12009. The assessment encompassed interviews of 4,500 households and anthropometric measurements of 5,600 children under five years of age. The October 2008 ANLA found that 1.2 million people in Southern Sudan were vulnerable to becoming severely food insecure during 2009. The survey also determined that Southern Sudan would need approximately 96,000 metric tons (MT) of food aid to mitigate the potential crisis.

13. (U) In July 2009, the GoSS and UN agencies conducted a mid-year ANLA to update calculations of food needs for the remainder of 2009. At the August 15 Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly, GoSS Vice President Dr. Riek Machar Teny presented the Food Security and Disaster Risk Reduction plan, requesting that donors support a UN appeal for an additional USD 44 million for food assistance, USD 9.3 million for emergency health and nutrition assistance, and USD 3.9 million for a livelihood response. USAID plans for current partners to respond to the recent emergency with contingency resources already prepositioned around the south, although additional

international donors may support the UN appeal.

¶4. (U) The joint assessment team conducted a rapid assessment in Eastern Equatoria, Jonglei, Northern Bahr El-Ghazal, Upper Nile, and Warrab states. The team chose the five states based on pre-existing levels of food security and other aggravating factors existing in 2009. Using primary and secondary data, the team analyzed relevant 2009 assessments, satellite images of rainfall, internally displaced person (IDP) numbers, and market prices. The assessment found that the combinations of: (1) high levels of physical insecurity and displacements; (2) late rains; and (3) high food prices have lead to a massive food deficit in Southern Sudan.

IDPs in South More Than Doubles

¶5. (U) According to the assessment and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), since January 2009 Southern Sudan has experienced increased levels of physical insecurity and displacement. As of mid-July, Southern Sudan hosted 250,000 IDPs, many resulting from inter-ethnic conflict in Jonglei and Upper Nile states as well as attacks by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Western and Central Equatoria states. (NOTE: This figure is almost two and a half times higher than that for the whole of 2008. END NOTE.) Typically, inter-ethnic conflict subsides with the beginning of the rainy season due to decreased access; however, because the rains failed to arrive in May and June, movement remained unrestricted and fighting continued. According to OCHA, Jonglei, Upper Nile, and Western Equatoria have been the most affected by the recent conflicts, resulting in 45,000, 59,000, and 78,000 IDPs, respectively.

¶6. (SBU) WFP and GoSS officials are particularly concerned about the humanitarian situation in Akobo County, Jonglei State, following the June 12 attack outside of Nassir Town, Upper Nile State. This attack closed the river corridor, hampering the UN's ability to transport food into the area and to respond to the Akobo IDP needs

without airlifts. Following earlier displacement, the 20,000 IDPs in Akobo remain dependent on WFP general food distributions. The landing strip in Akobo can only accommodate a small Buffalo (5 to 7 MT capacity) aircraft, severely limiting the delivery capacity of WFP to the area. WFP continues to work on opening the river and in late August was able to send a barge from Malakal to Akobo and back, using a UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) escort to Nassir. However, food is urgently needed in the area and thus some portion of the food will be airdropped to avert a major crisis.

Food Airlifts Necessary to Meet Need

¶7. (SBU) Airlifting food increases delivery costs and decreases the amount of food delivered, making it increasingly difficult to respond to needs. Airdropping will vastly increase the tonnage delivered as WFP could deploy large aircrafts. For example, an Ilyushin 76 can carry 30 MT from El Obeid, Northern Kordofan State, to the drop zone. (NOTE: The cost of airdropping food into the area is three to four times more expensive than transporting food aid via river transport due to the cost of the plane rental and the re-bagging of commodities that is required to protect the bags from breaking upon hitting the ground. END NOTE). In the UN and GoSS appeal, WFP requested USD 16.4 million to cover the costs of airdrops through the end of 2009. According to WFP, the proposed combination of interventions will reduce the announced airdrop budget but the organization will still require at least USD 12 million.

Hunger Season to Last Through October

¶8. (U) The late rains have significantly affected the households relying on subsistence agriculture. Farmers plant three varieties of sorghum in Southern Sudan to harvest cereals at different times of the year and help mitigate crop failure risks. In a typical year, the hunger season ends in August following the harvest of

short variety sorghum; however, poor rainfall in May and June significantly impacted the August harvest, ruining crops and extending the hunger season through at least October. According to the ANLA review, assuming a continuation of good rains that finally started in July in most states, the next harvest expected between October and November may be at or moderately below average. However, with poor rainfall and insecurity continuing in Upper Nile and Jonglei, this will not be the case as most people have not resumed agriculture activities. According to the August 2009 UN Emergency Action Plan, the next harvest in these two states is expected to be below normal or may fail altogether, putting hundreds of thousands of already weakened people at serious risk of starvation. In addition, excessive rainfall between August and October might cause flooding that could further negatively impact the later harvest.

Food Prices Rise

¶9. (U) Since February, food prices have increased and livestock prices have decreased in urban markets per the ANLA review. The rising food prices are a result of a combination of factors including: (1) the impact of the 2008 global food price crisis; (2) poor harvests in Eastern Africa; (3) new food import taxes imposed by the GoSS; (4) hoarding of food by traders; and (5) disruption of trade due to insecurity. Due to the higher food prices, the ANLA review observed individual coping mechanisms, including the selling of livestock, which subsequently drove down its value and altered the markets' terms of trade (ToT). The ToT measurement of how much sorghum a household can buy in the market by selling an adult bull has also dropped considerably throughout Southern Sudan. In Aweil, Northern Bahr El-Ghazal State, in July 2008, one adult bull could

buy 700kg of sorghum. In July 2009, the proceeds from one bull could only purchase 200 kg of sorghum. (NOTE: The ToT is a key indicator for agro-pastoral households, as such behavior tracks key coping mechanisms during the hunger season and in times of abnormal stress. END NOTE.)

¶10. (U) On August 15, at the Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly, GoSS Vice President Machar outlined the Food Security and Disaster Risk Reduction plan for GoSS officials, National Congress Party representatives, and the international donor community, asking international donors to increase funding in order to respond to the current situation. During the meeting, SSRRC and WFP representatives presented the results of the mid-year review including the projected requirements to respond to the food security crisis. Currently, the UN Emergency Action Plan includes requests for USD 44 million for food security to WFP, of which USD 12 million would be for the cost of airdrops, USD 9.3 million for health and nutrition to UNICEF, and USD 3.9 million for livelihood activities for FAO. USAID staff provided details of USAID's Office of Food for Peace (USAID/FFP) support to WFP each year, announced USAID/FFP's USD 250 million contribution for WFP's 2010 operation and reiterated the USG's support to the people of Sudan.

USG RESPONDS TO THE CURRENT CRISIS

¶11. (U) USAID is the largest donor of humanitarian assistance to Sudan. In recent years, USAID/FFP has provided WFP with approximately 50 percent of their annual emergency food aid needs. For fiscal year 2009, USAID/FFP's contribution to WFP's operation has an estimated value of USD 367 million. In addition, in preparation for WFP's 2010 emergency operation and in order to fill the food pipeline so that WFP can preposition food starting in January before the rains arrive and access is compromised, USAID/FFP has provided an early contribution of 218,760 MT, valued at USD 250 million. To assist WFP with the emergency food distributions, USAID/FFP partner, Catholic Relief Services, plans to use 1,450 MT of their contingency stocks prepositioned in Southern Sudan to respond to this crisis. USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) implements a FY 2009 USD 28 million dollar emergency program in the south, including recent funding for partners in Jonglei and Upper Nile to respond to the conflict and food security crisis. USAID/OFDA partners provide health,

nutrition, food security, safe water and non-food item distribution activities throughout the south and remain well-positioned to provide a response in this crisis. Because USAID programs are able to respond to the situation using existing partners and funding, USAID does not anticipate allocating additional funds at this time to support the UN appeal.

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COMMENT
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¶12. (SBU) In light of the GoSS's commitment to spend USD 2.7 billion for a strategic food reserve and grain contracts (REFTEL), many international donors are frustrated with the current situation and the GoSS's inability to respond. The GoSS has little to show for the off-budget grain purchases, according to WFP and international donors. In addition, WFP and international humanitarian agencies note that due to inadequate storage facilities, much of the food that was purchased is now unfit for human consumption. Given this situation, strengthening the GoSS's ability to mitigate risk and coordinate an appropriate response will be essential. In addition to any emergency assistance given, international donors should continue to engage the GoSS on early warning and disaster mitigation efforts to build GoSS capacity.

¶13. (SBU) Other international donors will likely address portions of the UN appeal, particularly the airdrop costs. In preliminary conversations with other donors, it appears that

DFID, the Joint Donor Team, European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Office, and the Common Humanitarian Fund will likely provide funds for the UN appeal. The UN and donors met during the week of August 24 to discuss and coordinate an appropriate response.

¶14. (SBU) Although WFP has adequate food stocks in Sudan to respond to the 22,000 MT needed to address the crisis by shifting food from less-urgent, development-oriented food aid projects, the organization is currently looking for additional funding to ensure that these programs can continue for the remainder of the year. Some international donors, including USAID and DFID, fear that the appeal has underestimated needs because the UN assessment team assumed normal rainfall for the remainder of 2009 and normal harvests between October and December. In addition, USAID believes that further inter-ethnic clashes may increase IDP numbers and needs. The Mission will continue to monitor the situation, and USAID will work with its partners to ensure that USG programs are responding to the most urgent needs. At the same time, USAID will continue recovery activities that are designed to stabilize areas of return and support food security. The briefing from the GoSS and meetings with the UN indicated, however, that the situation could require additional emergency resources.

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